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Peer review for Cochrane Reviews

John Hilton, Bryony Urquhart, Harriet MacLehose, Sally Bell-Syer, Monaz Mehta, Sera Tort

Cochrane Editorial Unit

Trusted evidence.
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Disclosures of conflicts of interest

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Overview

- Background: Why? How? When?
- Policy development process
- What the policy covers
- Some key areas of policy
- Review Group survey
- What's next
- What's happening in peer review?

Background

- Cochrane Editorial Unit supports Cochrane Review Groups, and works to improve quality and the Cochrane Library

- CRGS have policies, but no Cochrane-wide policy on peer review
- Policy to be supplemented with supporting guidance
- Peer review is a hot topic: is it doomed or thriving?

Why do we need a policy?

FOR EDITORIAL TEAMS

To provide clear expectations, standards and guidance for managing the peer review process.

FOR AUTHORS

To provide clarity around the peer review process for authors embarking on a Cochrane Review.

FOR PEER-REVIEWERS

To provide a framework for peer-reviewers working across CRGs.

FOR USERS

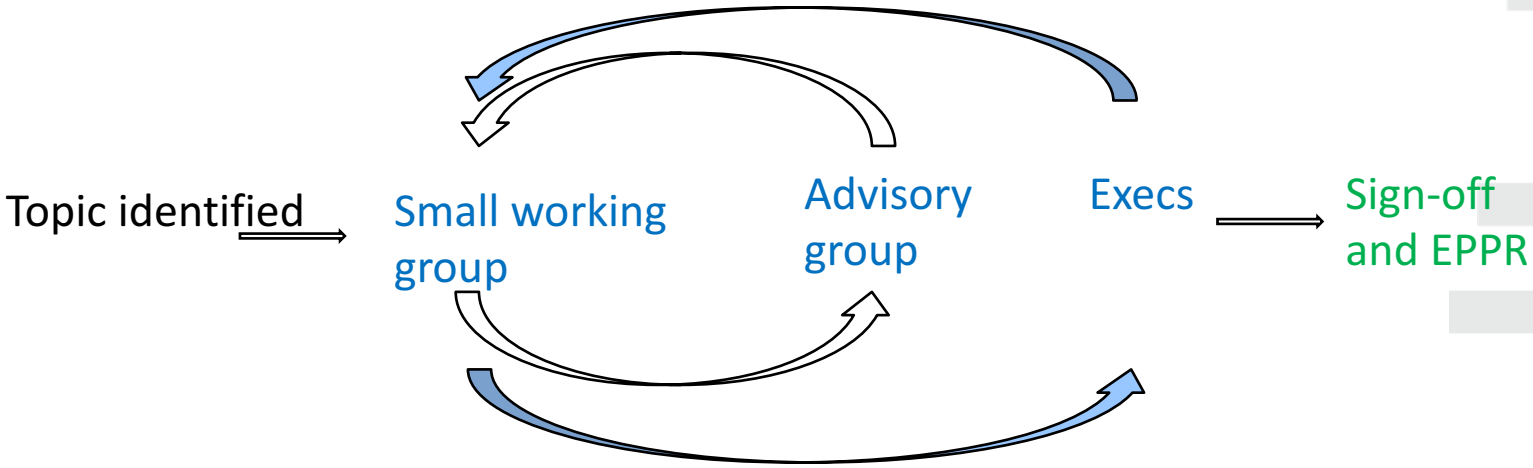
To provide clarity about Cochrane's peer review process, both in general and for specific reviews.

What's different about Cochrane?

- 'Peer referee' versus 'peer review'
- Consumers
- Multiple Review Groups
- Peer review not usually accept/reject
- Cochrane Reviews and long and complex
- Evidence-based

But in general the same principles and same challenges as faced by authors, editors and peer reviewers everywhere.

Editorial policy development



Peer review policy development

Workshop — **Oct 2015**

Draft policy development

Advisory Group formation

Policy revision

Survey

Draft policy completed

Consultation — **Nov 2016**

Revision, Sign-off, Publication

Communication

Implementation

Audit

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What's included

- Type of peer review
- Number and expertise of peer reviewers
- Declarations of interest for peer reviewers
- Acknowledgement and credit for peer reviewers
- Peer review turnaround time
- Ensuring that authors address reviewers' comments
- Feedback to peer reviewers
- Inviting peer reviewers to be authors
- Editorial roles

What's included (continued)

- Peer review checklists
- Peer reviewer conduct and ethics
- Conflict resolution
- Review Group peer review policies and procedures
- Research into peer review

- PLUS supporting guidance

What's not included

- Post-publication peer review
- Open (published) peer review

Open (named) peer review

Should peer reviewers identities be known to authors and other peer reviewers?

PROS	CONS
Transparency	Some reluctance
Open science	Less honest
Less one-sided	Biases (+ and -)
Better reviews?	Bland reviews?
Interests exposed	Reluctance

Evidence?

Limited and seems to vary between journals and settings.

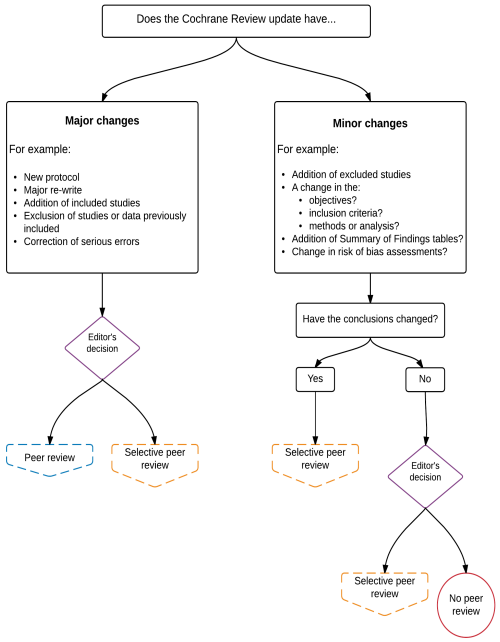
Reviewers: how many reviewers and what expertise?

- At least one clinical/topic specialist, with a minimum of one external to the CRG.
- PLUS one statistician/methodologist (if the review deviates from standard methods or uses complex methods).
- Aim to include (if relevant) at least one consumer (or user) peer reviewer

Peer review of updates

- Full or selective peer review?
- Always need peer review?
- What's changed?

>> Decision flowchart



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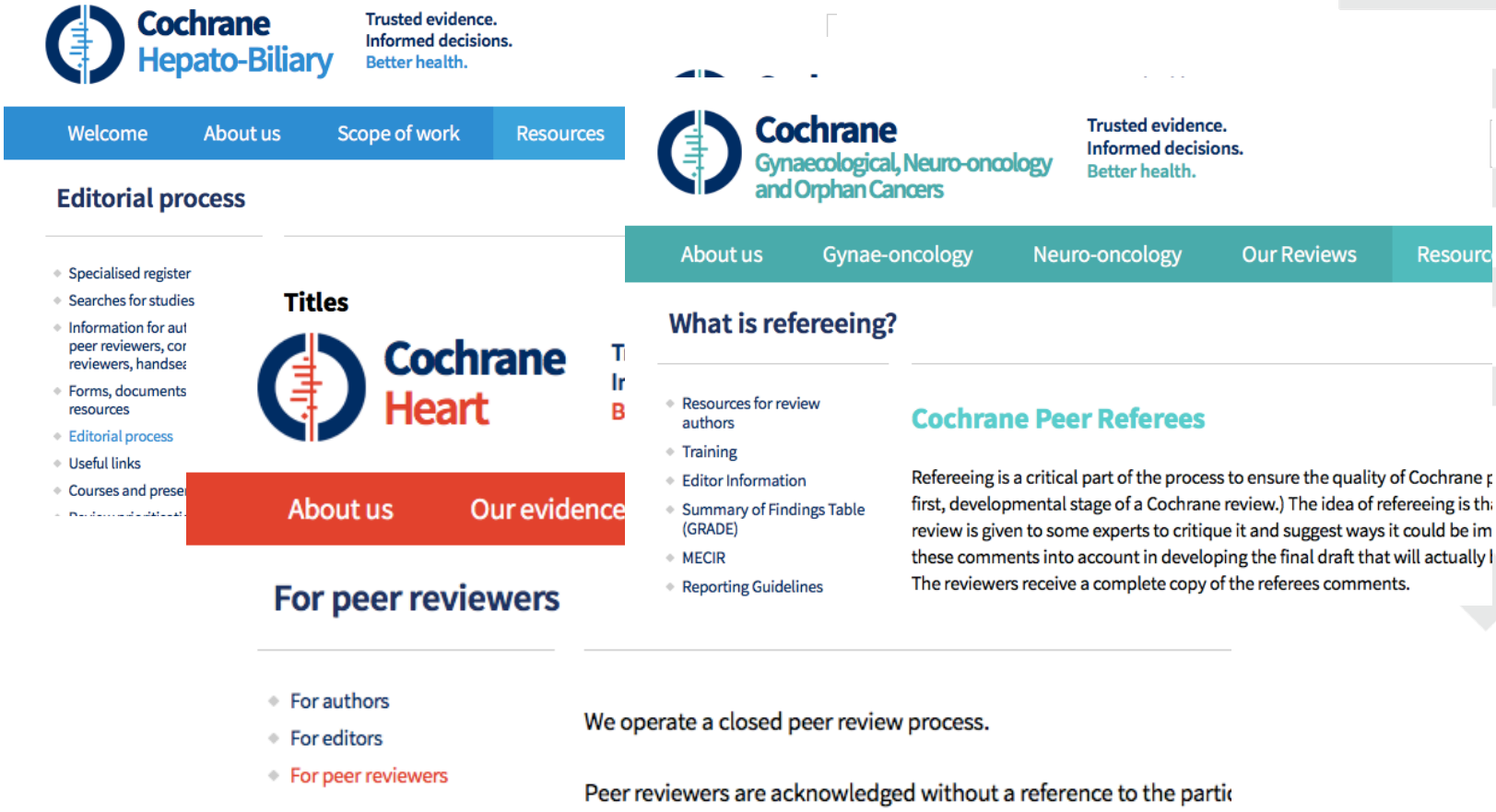
Published peer review policies



Survey of Review Groups

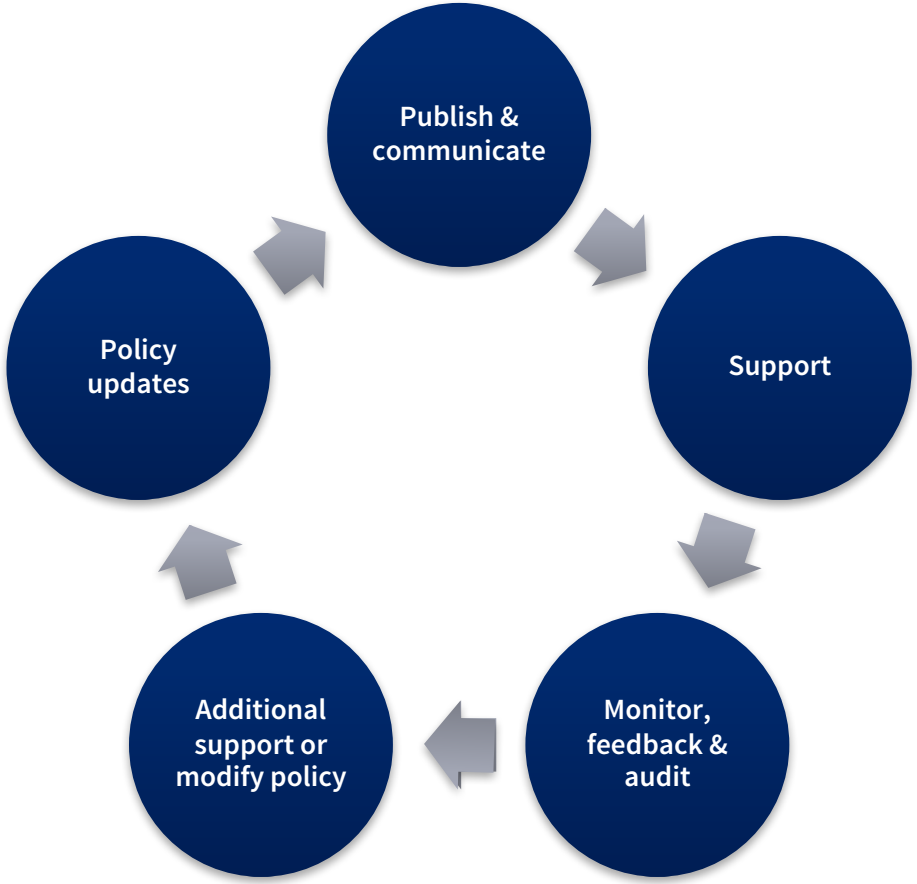
- Inform implementation of new policy
- Help to identify where additional guidance would help
- Share best practice
- Inform future policy development

50 Review Groups responded.

Survey: summary of findings

- All CRGs carry out peer review; about half have a documented policy
- Open (named) peer review is commonly used
- Most CRGs use the standard Cochrane peer review forms, or a modified version
- Most CRGs publish the names of their peer reviewers
- Feedback is often provided to peer reviewers; opportunity for further incentives
- The most challenging aspects of peer review relate to time: getting reviewers to respond to the invitation, the time it takes peer reviewers to return comments, finding specialist peer reviewers, and overall the time it takes to organise peer review.

Implementation



What's next?

Draft policy finalisation

Policy consultation, via Review Group Executives

Policy revision and sign-off

Cochrane Editorial and Publishing and Policy Resource updated and communicated

Webinars, presentations, guidance

Plan for monitoring, audit and feedback

Supporting guidance

How to find peer reviewers

How to keep peer reviewers

How to improve quality of peer reviews

How to speed up peer review

How to involve consumers and users

How to handle ethical issues

Introducing new peer review processes

Managing feedback

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PEER REVIEW WEEK 2016

19TH TO 25TH SEPTEMBER 2016

Theme: Recognition for review

publons

ORCID

Connecting Research and Researchers

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Research

Opportunities for research! Within groups; between groups; comparing with non-Cochrane

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PEERE

Increasing the evidence base in journalology: creating an international best practice journal research network

David Moher and Philippe Ravaud

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International Congress on Peer Review and Scientific Publication

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Thank you

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Chris Eccleston, Karen Robinson
Susan Wieland, Caroline Struthers
Melina Willson, Richard Wormald

CRG staff who responded to the survey

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https://www.kickstarter.com/projects/972533097/monument-to-an-anonymous-peer-reviewer/description